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ABSTRACT

This report presents a description of the Virginia Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (BTAP), its background and rationale, development, major program assumptions, and major program activities. The Virginia BTAP has three major components: teacher assessment, teacher assistance, and program management. The development and implementation of each of these components is progressing on schedule, i.e., beginning teachers are being assessed relative to the BTAP competencies, they are scheduled to receive assistance as necessary, and the initial program management systems are in place and operating. Competencies must be demonstrated in the following areas: (1) student academic learning time; (2) student accountability; (3) clarity of instructional structure; (4) student individual differences; (5) student evaluation; (6) consistent classroom discipline; (7) positive classroom climate; (8) learner self-concept; (9) meaningful lesson content; (10) planning; (11) questioning; (12) positive reinforcement of learning; (13) classroom supervision; and (14) classroom awareness. (JD)

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STATUS REPORT
ON
THE VIRGINIA BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Board of Education Meeting
Commonwealth of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia
February 25-26, 1986

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STATUS REPORT
BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

February 1986

PREFACE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Virginia Board of Education with an overview of the major components of the Virginia Beginning Teacher Assistance Program and to provide information relative to the status of the development and initial implementation of the program as of February, 1986.

The Virginia Beginning Teacher Assistance Program is composed of three major components, teacher assessment, teacher assistance and program management. The development and implementation of each of these components is progressing on schedule, i.e., beginning teachers are being assessed relative to the BTAP competencies, they are, as necessary, being scheduled to receive assistance and the initial program management systems are in place and operating.

Consistent with the expectations of the Virginia Department of Education and the University of Virginia Program Development Team, the reader is reminded that this program **SHOULD** be viewed as developmental in nature. In other words, because this program is "new" to the educational community in Virginia and involves new and emerging technology relative to the assessment and assistance of beginning teachers, it is expected that the program will change as the information base which undergirds the program grows.

VIRGINIA BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

PROGRAM RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

In February 1982, the Board of Education of the Commonwealth of Virginia adopted a resolution regarding initial certification and continuing professional certification of Virginia's teachers. Elements of the Board's resolution that are pertinent to the Virginia Beginning Teacher Assistance Program are as follows:

1. Beginning July 1, 1984 first-time applicants for initial teacher certification in Virginia will be granted a two-year nonrenewable teaching certificate. The beginning date of the program was subsequently changed to July 1, 1985.
2. To gain the Collegiate Professional Certificate (a five-year renewable certificate) a beginning teacher must demonstrate functional knowledge of selected indicators of competence through satisfactory performance in the classroom within the two year provisional period.
3. The general purpose of the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program is to upgrade the performance of Virginia's teaching force by focusing on beginning teacher performance relative to selected competencies (the BTAP competencies are included as Attachment A of this report). Specifically, the objectives of the program are:
 - (a) to provide assurance that every teacher who receives the Collegiate Professional Certificate demonstrates the possession of selected competencies;
 - (b) to provide assistance to beginning teachers in the development of these competencies.
4. Satisfactory demonstration of the competencies in the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program comprises only one of several requirements that must be completed to obtain a Collegiate Professional Certificate.
5. The Beginning Teacher Assistance Program is concerned only with the responsibility of the Commonwealth of Virginia to ensure that each individual who is granted the Collegiate Professional Certificate has demonstrated minimum professional knowledge necessary for state certification requirements. The granting of continuing employment and the determination of effective or successful teaching is the responsibility of local school divisions as a part of their employment policies and practices.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIRGINIA BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Virginia Beginning Teacher Assistance Program has been developed in three major phases over a three year period beginning in September 1982. The following is a brief description of the purposes of these three phases of program development.

Phase 1: September, 1982 - July, 1983

The purpose of Phase 1 was the development a general approach (model) for the Virginia Beginning Teacher Assistance Program. The initial program development activities involved three reviews of existing materials--(1) a review of existing beginning teacher programs in other states, (2) a review of legal precedents and basis of performance-based assessments and (3) a review of literature on teacher competence and professional development of beginning teachers.

These reviews were used as the basis for the development of four alternative approaches to the general design of the program. The Department of Education with the assistance of a panel of national experts in the fields of research in teaching and teacher education then selected one of the four alternative approaches as being most appropriate for the needs in Virginia.

Phase 2: August, 1983 - July, 1984

The major purposes of Phase 2 BTAP development were (1) to specify the major program components, (2) to determine the competencies to be addressed and (3) to develop preliminary assessment instrumentation and assistance strategies. In order to insure that the program design and the specific program components would meet the needs of Virginia, the Department of Education appointed a twenty member BTAP Program Advisory Committee to provide structured recommendations concerning the development of the program. This advisory committee, representing relevant constituents of the educational community in Virginia, e.g., teachers, administrators, teacher training institutions, met on a regular basis to advise the program development team.

Phase 3: August, 1984 - July, 1985

The purposes of Phase 3 development were (1) to finalize the program design, (2) to develop assessment instruments, (3) to develop the assistance component of the program, (4) to pilot test instrumentation, training, and assistance procedures, and (5) to develop administrative strategies to implement the program.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM STRUCTURE

PROGRAM GOALS

1. To provide assurance that every teacher who receives the Collegiate Professional Certificate (a five-year renewable certificate) has demonstrated the possession of selected competencies, and
2. To provide assistance to beginning teachers in the development of these competencies.

It should be noted that, while beginning teachers must meet the requirements of the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program, these requirements constitute only a part of the requirements which must be met in order to be issued the regular five-year renewable certificate.

MAJOR PROGRAM ASSUMPTIONS

1. The certification of teachers is a state level function. Therefore, the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program is designed to separate the functions of teacher certification from those functions which are appropriately performed by local school divisions, e.g., conditions for employment established by local school boards.
2. The Beginning Teacher Assistance Program will operate in such a manner as to minimize the use of teachers and administrators who are employed on a full-time basis as classroom observers and in such a manner as to place as little as possible of the management and logistical burdens of this program on local school divisions.
3. After July 1, 1985, each beginning teacher in Virginia will be issued a two-year nonrenewable teaching certificate. In order to qualify for the Collegiate Professional Certificate (a five-year renewable certificate) the beginning teacher must meet certain requirements as specified by the Board of Education. Successful completion of the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program is only one of these requirements.
4. Each beginning teacher will have more than one opportunity to demonstrate competence in the specified BTAP competency areas and will have the opportunity to participate in assistance activities developed specifically to improve performance in these competency areas.
5. A single assessment procedure will be implemented to ensure a standardized statewide process.

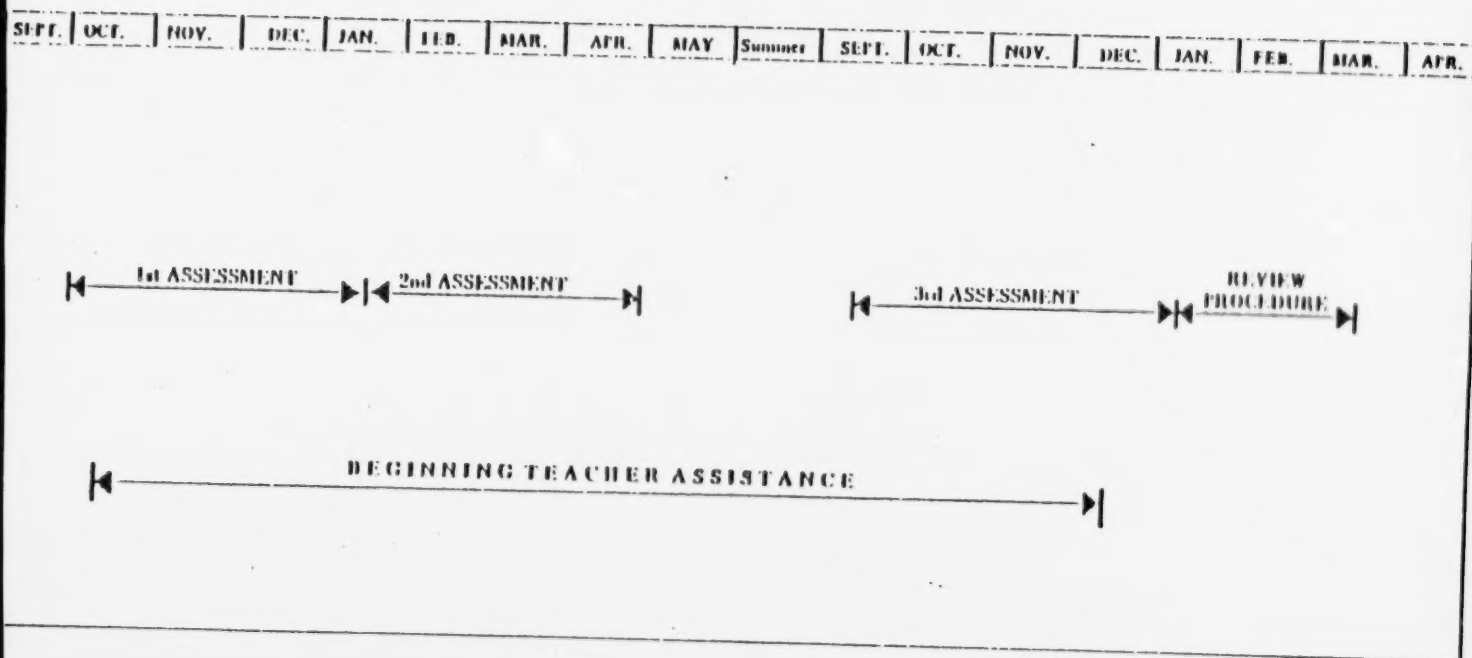
6. Appropriate and interested parties have been involved in the development of the Virginia Beginning Teacher Assistance Program including teachers, administrators, parents, school board members, college and university faculty, and others with a special interest in education in the Commonwealth.

MAJOR PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

As indicated by the program timeline (Figure I), beginning teachers will have three opportunities (during the first, second and third assessment periods) to demonstrate that they possess the required competencies. The major activities which comprise the Virginia Beginning Teacher Assistance Program are as follows:

1. Beginning teachers, i.e., those who will be required to participate in this program, will be identified during the spring and summer preceding the first year of teaching.
2. During the early fall of the first year of teaching all beginning teachers will attend an orientation session in which the major aspects of the program will be discussed. These orientation sessions will include information about the rationale and background of the program, the program purposes, the structure and procedures of the program, and the competencies and indicators upon which the assessment and assistance will be based.
3. Each beginning teacher will be scheduled for three observations during the first assessment period.
4. If BTAP requirements are not met upon completing the first assessment period, the beginning teacher will be provided assistance and will be reassessed during the second assessment period. If BTAP requirements are not met upon completing the second assessment period, the beginning teacher will be provided additional assistance and will be assessed a third time.
5. When a beginning teacher demonstrates an acceptable level of competence (following the first, second, or third assessment period), he/she will be informed that the BTAP requirements have been met.
6. If a beginning teacher fails to meet the BTAP requirements after the three assessment periods, he/she will not be eligible for the Collegiate Professional Certificate.

Figure 1
**BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
 PROGRAM TIME LINE**



BTAP STATUS-FEBRUARY, 1986

1. Nine BTAP Regional Centers have been established and are operational (see Attachment B).
2. A preliminary version of the BTAP information system is currently being developed and operated by the Bureau of Educational Research, University of Virginia. The Virginia Department of Education will select an external consultant to develop and begin implementation of the final version of the BTAP information system during the 1986-1987 program year.
3. Those beginning teachers who will participate in the program during the 1985-1986 fiscal year have been identified. Six hundred and sixty-eight (668) beginning teachers entered the program in September 1985 and two hundred and sixty-five (265) entered the program in January 1986 (total 933).
4. Beginning teachers who entered the program in September 1985 attended program orientation sessions during the fall. At these orientation sessions teachers were provided with information relative to the BTAP competencies and were given the BTAP Assistance Manual. Orientation sessions for those beginning teachers who entered the program in January 1986 are currently being operated by the BTAP Regional Centers.
5. Eighty-two (82) BTAP classroom observers were identified and employed by the Regional Centers in September, 1985. These classroom observers received training (two day session) in September, 1985 and received follow-up training (one day session) in February, 1986.
6. Thirty-nine (39) BTAP assistance instructors were identified and employed by the Regional Centers in December-January and were provided training (one day session) focusing on seven of the BTAP competencies in January, 1986. They will receive training on the remaining seven BTAP competencies in February, 1986.
7. Approximately 78% of the beginning teachers who entered the program in September, 1985 received their college/university training from out of state institutions.
8. The 668 beginning teachers who entered the program in September, 1985 were observed three times during November and December. Approximately 55% of these teachers successfully completed the BTAP requirements and were notified to this effect.

9. The 45% of the beginning teachers who did not successfully complete all of the BTAP requirements were notified of their areas of weakness and are currently being scheduled to attend BTAP assistance sessions in these areas. After receiving assistance these teachers will be observed in the classroom during April and May, 1986.
10. The 265 beginning teachers who entered the program in January, 1986 are currently receiving BTAP orientation, including the receipt of the BTAP assistance materials. These teachers will be observed in the classroom during the early Spring, 1986.
11. The following represent completion/noncompletion rates on selected factors for those beginning teachers who entered the program in September, 1985:

**SUMMARY INFORMATION
FALL 1985 BTAP ASSESSMENT**

	SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION	NON COMPLETION
TOTAL	55%	45%
ELEMENTARY	63%	36%
SECONDARY	49%	51%
WHITE	55%	45%
BLACK	57%	43%

VIRGINIA BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

STATUS REPORT

FEBRUARY, 1986

ATTACHMENT A

BTAP COMPETENCIES

VIRGINIA BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BEGINNING TEACHER COMPETENCIES

INTRODUCTION

The basic purpose of the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program is to assess beginning teachers relative to the degree to which they can demonstrate the possession of selected classroom competencies and to provide assistance to those teachers who fail to demonstrate the possession of these competencies. This document contains a list of the competencies a beginning teacher will be expected to demonstrate in the classroom before receiving the Virginia Collegiate Professional Teaching Certificate.

This program defines a **COMPETENT TEACHER** as one who possesses certain knowledge and has the ability to translate this knowledge into appropriate classroom teaching behaviors. Given this definition, being a competent teacher is necessary but not sufficient to being an effective teacher.

Teacher competency is necessary because it is presumed that a teacher who cannot demonstrate these competencies does not know enough about teaching and learning to become a good teacher. On the other hand, teacher competency is not sufficient because it is possible that an individual who can demonstrate the possession of these competencies may not necessarily be an effective teacher. The notion of effective teaching is much broader than the demonstrated possession of a limited number of teaching competencies. Competent teaching as defined by BTAP does not include some factors which would be included in the concept of satisfactory teaching performance, e.g., the ability to work well with the other teachers in the school or the ability to communicate effectively with parents. A certificate of competence to teach has not in the past been considered to be a guarantee of satisfactory performance as a teacher nor should it be so regarded in this case.

In addition, the idea of effective teaching implies typical performance while competency assessment according to BTAP is based on demonstrated capability in a specified number of structured situations. An individual may demonstrate the capability of behaving in appropriate ways during the BTAP assessment but, for various reasons, may not typically behave in that manner. **BTAP PROPOSES TO ASSESS AN INDIVIDUAL'S CAPABILITIES BUT CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT THE INDIVIDUAL WILL ROUTINELY BEHAVE IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THESE CAPABILITIES.**

VIRGINIA BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
BEGINNING TEACHER COMPETENCIES

1. ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME

The competent teacher knows that learning is directly related to the amount of time learners are actively engaged in planned learning activities. The one relationship most clearly established by process-product research is the relationship between academic engaged time and learners' achievement gains.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

The competent teacher knows the importance of holding learners responsible for completing assigned tasks. It is important for the teacher to make sure that every student actually undergoes the learning experiences planned for him or her. Holding the learner personally responsible for completing assigned learning tasks is also important because it gives learners practice in assuming and discharging personal responsibilities.

3. CLARITY OF STRUCTURE

The competent teacher knows that learning is facilitated if the lesson is presented in a clear systematic sequence consistent with the objectives of instruction. Learning is a conscious activity of the learner which proceeds (according to research in human learning) most efficiently when the learner is aware of the relationship of each part of the activity to the other parts and to the whole.

4. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

The competent teacher knows that learners progress at different speeds, learn in different ways, and respond to different kinds of motivation. Few generalizations about learning are better established than this one. Research indicates that teaching strategies should be adapted to these differences if all learners are to achieve at their full potential.

5. EVALUATION

The competent teacher knows that learner progress is facilitated by instructional objectives which are known to the learners and which coincide with the objectives of evaluation. Important information about learner status can be obtained informally while teaching and can be used in making tactical teaching decisions. Additionally, formal assessment of the learner's progress is important in making instructional decisions, grading, and promotional decisions.

Skill in instructional decision making has recently received wide recognition as a critical element in effective teaching and has been verified by research as an important element. Through research, it is becoming evident that what a teacher does may be less important than when he/she does it. Competence in matching given instructional objectives with informal and formal evaluation contributes to the soundness of the teacher's decisions during the course of instruction.

6. CONSISTENT RULES

The competent teacher knows that rules for classroom behavior must be clear and consistent and that learners must understand and accept the rules and the consequences of violating them. When rules are unclear or applied inconsistently, teachers will have difficulty managing classrooms.

7. AFFECTIVE CLIMATE

The competent teacher knows that learning occurs more readily in a classroom environment which is non-punitive and accepting. Research indicates that achievement gains are related positively to an affective environment which is non-punitive, i.e., relatively free from hostility and threats.

8. LEARNER SELF-CONCEPT

The competent teacher knows that a learner's achievement may be enhanced by improving his self-concept, and that his self-concept is enhanced if the teacher's expectations are high and if the teacher shows appreciation of the learner's personal worth.

9. MEANINGFULNESS

The competent teacher knows that learning is facilitated when content is related to learners' interests, common experiences or to information with which they are familiar. Although the importance of meaningfulness in learning has been formally established by research in human learning done in psychological laboratories, practicing teachers have recognized its importance for many years.

10. PLANNING

The competent teacher knows the importance of deliberate and varied planning activities. Instructional planning should reflect the teacher's knowledge that: (1) learning activities should match the instructional objectives; (2) learning is facilitated when ideas are communicated in more ways than one and when two or more sensory modes are employed; (3) the current literature on the teaching profession should be regularly consulted; and (4) learners' scores on standardized tests contain important and useful information about the class as a group and about individual learners.

Planning activities reflecting the teacher's knowledge of instructional objectives and activities, multiple instructional modes, the current professional literature, and the interpretation of test data facilitate instruction and learner progress.

11. QUESTIONING SKILL

The competent teacher knows how to phrase convergent, divergent and probing questions and to use them to develop learners' academic knowledge. Asking questions is a major professional teaching tool and the skillful use of questions has been extensively studied and researched.

12. REINFORCEMENT

The competent teacher demonstrates awareness that the skillful use of reinforcement is an effective means of encouraging and discouraging particular behaviors. Establishment of the importance of reinforcement in modifying human behavior and clarification of principles governing its use has been one of the principal achievements of research in learning.

13. CLOSE SUPERVISION

The competent teacher knows that more is learned during individual, small and whole group activities if the learners are monitored. Research indicates that learning is facilitated during activities when they are monitored rather closely, presumably because this increases the amount of learner engagement. Close supervision also provides opportunities for the teacher to assist and encourage learners.

14. AWARENESS

The competent teacher knows that effective classroom management depends on knowing what is occurring in the classroom and that the learners perceive the teacher knows what is going on. The teacher who is aware of what is going on in the classroom is likely to increase learner participation in learning activities and reduce disruptions.